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ABSTRACT

This report evaluates the Bill of Rights in a Multicultural Society Project. The project was developed by the Social Studies Unit of the Board of Education's Division of Instruction and Professional Development of the city of New York. The purpose of the project, which consisted of a week long summer institute in August 1991 at Brooklyn Law School, and two follow up workshops held at the end of the following fall and spring semesters, was to increase the participants' (secondary-level teachers and administrators) knowledge of the Bill of Rights, and to develop and disseminate an innovative Bill of Rights curriculum. The 27 participants in the summer institute were taught about the theory and history of the Bill of Rights by historians and legal scholars. They used this knowledge to develop a Bill of Rights curriculum to be used in their individual classrooms. Up to 84 percent of the participants rated the summer institute areas as either very good or excellent, and none of the respondents rated any of the institute areas as poor. No data from the first follow up workshop was collected, but the second follow up workshop received an overwhelmingly positive rating with five of the six aspects being rated "excellent" by 55 percent or more of the participants. The report concludes that the objectives of increasing participants knowledge of the Bill of Rights, the development of a Bill of Rights curriculum, and the dissemination of a curriculum were all achieved. Recommendations include adding a bilingual component, and providing incentives to increase attendance. (DK)

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OER Report

EVALUATION OF THE 1991-92 BILL OF RIGHTS IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY PROJECT

SO 024 752

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bill of Rights in a Multicultural Society Project was developed by the Social Studies Unit of the Board of Education's Division of Instruction and Professional Development. The purpose of the project which consisted of a weeklong summer institute from August 19-23, 1991 at Brooklyn Law School, and two follow-up workshops held at the end of the following fall and spring semesters, was to increase the participants' (secondary-level teachers and administrators) knowledge of the Bill of Rights, and to develop and disseminate an innovative Bill of Rights curriculum.

The 27 participants in the summer institute were taught about the theory and history of the Bill of Rights by historians and legal scholars. They used this knowledge to develop a Bill of Rights curriculum to be used in their individual classrooms. The Board of Education asked the Office of Educational Research to evaluate the program.

Up to 84 percent of the participants rated the summer institute areas as either very good or excellent, and none of the respondents rated any of the institute areas as poor. O.E.R. received no data from the first follow-up workshop and therefore it could not be evaluated. However, O.E.R. did receive nine questionnaires which rated six aspects of the second follow-up workshop. This workshop received an overwhelmingly positive rating with five of the six aspects being rated "excellent" by 55 percent or more of the participants. The lowest rating of any of the second follow-up workshop's aspects was "good".

The data O.E.R. received permitted the evaluation of three of the five program objectives. Based on the findings O.E.R. concluded that the objectives of increasing participants' knowledge of the Bill of Rights, the development of a Bill of Rights curriculum, and the dissemination of a curriculum were all achieved.

O.E.R. recommends that the project coordinator consider adding a bilingual component, code pre/post tests, provide incentives to increase attendance at follow-up workshops, and contemplate extending the length of the summer institute.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared by the Office of Educational Research (O.E.R.) under the direction of Mabel Payne, the research unit manager. James Reeves II was responsible for data analysis and wrote this report.

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I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The Office of Educational Research (O.E.R.) was asked to conduct an evaluation of the 1991-1992 Bill of Rights in a Multicultural Society Project. This project was administered and implemented by the Social Studies Unit of the Board of Education's Division of Instruction and Professional Development. The purpose of the project was twofold: 1) to increase the awareness, knowledge, and understanding of secondary-level educators about how the Bill of Rights protects all people in a diversified society; and 2) to utilize the knowledge gained by developing an innovative Bill of Rights curriculum. This evaluation covered the time period from August 1991-December 1992, the lifespan of the project.

PROJECT FUNDING AND DESCRIPTION

Funding

In November 1990, the Social Studies Unit submitted a proposal to the Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution in Washington, D.C., requesting funds to help cover the costs associated with the development and implementation of a Bill of Rights secondary-level curriculum. The request was for $38,926, accounting for nearly half of the total budget ($79,457). The remainder of the funds were to be provided by the Board of Education of the City of New York.

Project Description

The project consisted of an intensive one-week training seminar (the "summer institute"), two follow-up workshops, and the development and dissemination of a Bill of Rights secondary education curriculum. The summer institute was held at Brooklyn Law School from August 19-23, 1991. The follow-up workshops occurred in the fall of 1991 and the spring of 1992.

Curriculum Dissemination

The dissemination of the Bill of Rights curriculum was to take place in several phases. After the first workshop the curriculum would be distributed to the workshop participants for their classroom use. Then it would be made available to educators at a regional social studies conference. By the end of the second workshop, a final Bill of Rights curriculum, developed by the participants, would be ready for wider dissemination to secondary-level educators at the local, state, and regional levels.

Program Objectives

The project proposal submitted to the Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution, outlined the following objectives:

- By the end of the second workshop, May 1992, participants' knowledge of the Bill of Rights and the Supreme Court will have increased;
- Using a self-developed curriculum, the teacher-participants will transfer their knowledge of the Bill of Rights and the Supreme Court to their students;

- As a result of the participant-developed curriculum, and by the conclusion of the May 1992 workshop, the participants' students will demonstrate an increased understanding of the Bill of Rights and its interpretation by the Supreme Court;
- By the end of the first follow-up workshop, December 1991, through the joint effort of the workshop participants, a single curriculum will be developed for their use in the spring semester; and
- After the second follow-up workshop, the curriculum will be disseminated to secondary-level educators at the local, state, and regional levels.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the evaluation conducted by the Office of Educational Research (O.E.R.) was to assess whether the objectives of the project were achieved. The methods used to evaluate this project included: participant workshop feedback forms; interviews with the coordinator; field notes from the project consultant's observations; participants' notes and comments; and a list of the dates and places the curriculum was distributed. Data on whether teacher or student knowledge of the Bill of Rights increased were not supplied to evaluators.

SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

This report encompasses the entire lifespan of the project--from August 1991 through December 1992. The findings of this evaluation are provided in Chapter II of this report. Chapter III presents O.E.R.'s conclusions and recommendations.

II. FINDINGS

THE SUMMER INSTITUTE

Twenty-seven educators from five high schools and seven middle schools participated in the summer institute. They met daily, Monday through Friday from 9:00am - 3:00pm. Instruction was provided by a legal and constitutional scholar, legal consultants, historians, and museum educators. The institute consisted of three major components: the Scholarly Component; the Constitution Works Component; and the Teacher Training Component.

Scholarly Component

This component provided the participants with the theory and history of the development of the Bill of Rights and its interpretation by the Supreme Court. The classroom instruction was provided by a legal and Constitutional scholar, and attorneys were invited as guest speakers. The lectures were based on the following themes:

- History of the Bill of Rights
- Incorporation of the Bill of Rights
- First Amendment Freedoms (speech)
- First Amendment Freedoms (religion)
- Criminal Procedures

The importance of the Bill of Rights to minorities and new immigrants was highlighted by studying cases that emphasized these themes.

The Constitution Works Component

This component was administered by the Education Division at Federal Hall national memorial in New York City. Federal Hall is the location of President Washington's inaugural address, and has served as a battleground for many political debates.

The Constitution Works, located on the second aod third floors, is the largest of all of the educational programs offered at Federal Hall. This is where mock trials are held and issues pertaining to the federal government are discussed.

The Education Division provided museum educators to teach and answer participants' questions. The museum educators supplied the participants with student workbooks and copies of teacher andstudent guides to Denver Dispatch v. United States, a hypothetical Supreme Court case demonstrating the frequently opposing interests of national security and freedom of the press. The participants argued this case in a mock colonial court where they were divided into groups of Justices and lawyers and given costumes. In addition, participants and their students were permitted to return to Federal Hall during the school year to use the courtroom and costumes to role play cases.

Curriculum Development

Besides learning more about the Bill of Rights, participants worked with a teacher trainer to develop a Bill of Rights curriculum to be used in their ioeividual classrooms during the fall 1991 term. The trainer presented a variety of tools that could be used to develop and teach a Bill of Rights curriculum.

These tools included case studies, cooperative learning activities, simulations, and video tapes. Participants were encouraged to be creative in the use of these tools when developing techniques for instruction. This component also provided an opportunity for the participants to enhance their overall instructional skills.

In addition to developing their own class curriculum, the project participants also assisted in developing a joint curriculum to be disseminated throughout New York State.

PARTICIPANTS' SUMMER INSTITUTE ASSESSMENT

At the end of the summer institute, participants were asked to complete evaluation forms. These forms were developed by the project coordinators, and consisted of rating sections for each of the institute presentation areas, and an open-ended question asking participants to express their general views of and ideas about the institute. The four aspects of the summer institute rated by the participants were case histories, Constitution Works, instructional methodologies, and lectures. The rating scale was from five to one (5=excellent, 4=very good, 3=good, 2=fair, 1=poor).

There was a total of 27 summer participants. The first section of the evaluation form was completed by 25 of the participants (92.5 percent), while all 27 completed the comments section. Table 1 represents the 25 participants' ratings of the institute areas. It can be seen from Table 1 that up to 84 percent of the participants rated the areas as either excellent

Table 1*
Summary of Participants' Ratings of Summer Institute Areas

INSTITUTE AREAS	RATINGS									
	Excellent		Very Good		Good		Fair		Poor	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Case Histories	8	32	13	52	3	12	1	4	0	-
Constitution Works	7	28	13	52	5	20	0	-	0	-
Instructional Methodologies	15	60	4	16	6	24	0	-	0	-
Lectures	4	16	14	56	5	20	2	8	0	-

* Twenty-five participants rated each institute area.

- Instructional methodologies received the highest percentage of "excellent" ratings.
- Only 16 percent of respondents rated the lectures as excellent.
- None of the respondents rated any of the institute presentation areas as poor.

or very good, up to 24 percent of the respondents rated them as good, and none of the respondents rated them as poor. Instructional methodologies received the highest number of "excellent" responses (15), and lectures received the highest number (2) of "poor" ratings.

O.E.R. grouped respondents' replies to the open-ended question into five categories. The categories, number of responses per category, and percentages can be found in Table 2. Note that the majority of responses was very positive. Four of the respondents thought that the institute should be extended, three complained that the reading material was distributed too late, and one felt that the institute should include a bilingual component.

In addition, six of the participants from the summer institute mailed letters to the project coordinators summarizing their perceptions of the summer institute. Five of these participants complimented the presentations, activities, and materials. Four found the activities to be easily incorporated in their classes, and three noted that their knowledge of the Bill of Rights increased enormously as a result of their participation in the summer institute. The writers also expressed a strong desire to participate in any future projects.

FOLLOW-UP WORKSHOPS

During the 1991-1992 school year a follow-up workshop was held at the end of each semester. These sessions provided participants with a forum to discuss the results of teaching their individual Bill of Rights curriculum, to exchange

Table 2 Summer Institute Participants' Comments		
Categories*	Number	Percent
Lectures were excellent/interesting	14	51.8
Institute was well planned/informative	6	22.2
Summer institute should be extended	4	14.8
Institute should include a bilingual component	1	3.7
Reading material was distributed too late	3	11.1

* O.E.R. grouped the 27 institute participants' comments into these five categories.

- 50 percent of the participants thought the lectures were excellent.
- One participant wanted a bilingual component added to the institute.
- Slightly mose than 10 percent of the participants believed the reading material should have been distributed earlier.

successful ideas and practices, and to design and prepare for the dissemination of a final Bill of Rights model curriculum.

The first workshop was held on December 10, 1991. At this meeting the participants discussed the strengths and weaknesses of their individually developed curricula and closely examined legal cases with Bill of Rights implications. Emerging from these discussions were ideas that led to the development of participants' knowledge of the Bill of Rights, and a single curriculum that participants used to teach the Bill of Rights in the spring 1992 term.

The second follow-up workshop was held on May 5, 1992, at the High School of Fashion Industries. This session allowed the participants to continue increasing their knowledge of the Bill of Rights and the Supreme Court, to bring each other up-to-date on their teaching experiences, and to make any necessary final revisions to the curriculum.

Participants' Assessment of the Follow-up Workshops

Not all of the participants from the summer institute appeared at the follow-up workshops. Although a few were unwilling to attend, most were unable to relinquish prior school-based obligations.

Evaluators received nine evaluation forms completed by program participants at the conclusion of the second follow-up workshop.

Note that while slightly less than one-half (44 percent) gave "the objectives were achieved" aspect an "excellent" rating,

the majority of respondents gave the other program aspects an "excellent" rating. Their ratings of program aspects are displayed in Table 3.

In the open-ended section of the evaluation forms many (5) of the participants noted that the workshop leader was excellent. They also stated that the handouts would be useful for classroom instruction, and that their knowledge of search and seizure laws had been significantly increased.

Curriculum Dissemination

In compliance with the project objectives, the participant-developed Bill of Rights curriculum was disseminated on four separate occasions. The first occurred in January 1992 at the Greater Metro Social Studies conference. This was a gathering of teachers from New York City, New Jersey, Long Island, and Westchester County. In June 1992 the project director presented the curriculum at a conference for educators in California. The third distribution was in August 1992 in Dix Hills, Long Island. On December 5, 1992, 40 middle and high school educators attended a staff development seminar at Martin Luther King Jr. High School at which the curriculum was presented. There are plans to merge the curriculum with a national program, "We the People," and disseminate it in Miami, Los Angeles, Chicago, aoe Dallas.

Table 3
Second Follow-up Workshop's Questionnaire Responses*

Workshop Aspects	RATINGS					
	EXCELLENT		VERY GOOD		GOOD	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Workshop Purpose	7	77	2	22	0	0
Workshop Organization	5	55	3	33	1	11
Objectives were achieved	4	44	5	55	0	0
Valuable Content	6	66	2	22	1	11
Presenter was knowledge-able	8	88	1	11	0	0
Effective Presenter	5	55	4	44	0	0

* Nine participants completed this project-developed questionnaire.

- "The presenter was knowledgeable" received the highest number of "excellent" ratings.
- Less than one-half of the participants (44 percent) noted "the objectives were achieved" aspect as "excellent", while the majority (55 percent) rated it as "very good".

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the responses on the evaluation forms completed by participants in the summer institute and the second follow-up workshop, the objective of increasing participants' knowledge of the Bill of Rights and the Supreme Court was achieved. In fact, most participants suggested that their knowledge had significantly increased.

The development of a curriculum by the end of the first follow-up workshop was also achieved. This curriculum was used by the participants the following semester, who thought that it was very easy to use in classroom instruction.

The last measurable objective, dissemination, was achieved as well. As specified in the findings, the curriculum was disseminated to secondary-level educators on the local, regional, and national levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings O.E.R. recommends that the project coordinator:

- investigate ways of increasing participant attendance at follow-up workshops;
- look at the feasibility of including a bilingual component;
- consider extending the length of the summer institute; and
- administer coded pre/post tests to participants and participants' students to effectively measure any increase in knowledge.